50th anniversary marked

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Fifty years ago, a dozen young men at Vanderbilt University published a book about the South, a place they saw as spiritual and aesthetic in the thrust of post-World War I industrialism.

The three surviving members of the group known as The Agrarians — Robert Penn Warren, Andrew Lytle and Lyle Lanier — returned to Vanderbilt recently for an anniversary seminar.

"I'm amazed that the document has held up over the years," Lanier said, looking out over the packed lecture hall. "No one considered themselves a prophet. But, we turned out to be far better prophets than we knew."

After the work, "I'll Take My Stand," was published in 1930, it remained out of print until 1958.

"It occurred to me in the spring of '79 that this year would be the 50th anniversary of this very famous book," Walter Sullivan, a professor of English at Vanderbilt, said.

Sullivan sought the help of William C. Havard, a professor of political science, and together they obtained money from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the university's chancellor, Alexander Heard, and the university, for the symposium. About 10 scholars in Southern literature, history, political science and sociology participated.

"We were awfully lucky because we got the people we wanted," Sullivan said. "There is no chance of getting these three men together again."

At the center of the movement a half-century ago was a group of four poets at Vanderbilt called the Fugitives. The four men, Warren, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom and Donald Davidson, looked to the South as a symbol of a life untainted by the ugliness of industrialization.

They saw their region as a stronghold against mechanization — a place where people held on to the agrarian way of life.

The South may have seemed backward to Northern industrialists, but to the young Fugitive poets it represented a life of leisure, tradition, aestheticism and religion